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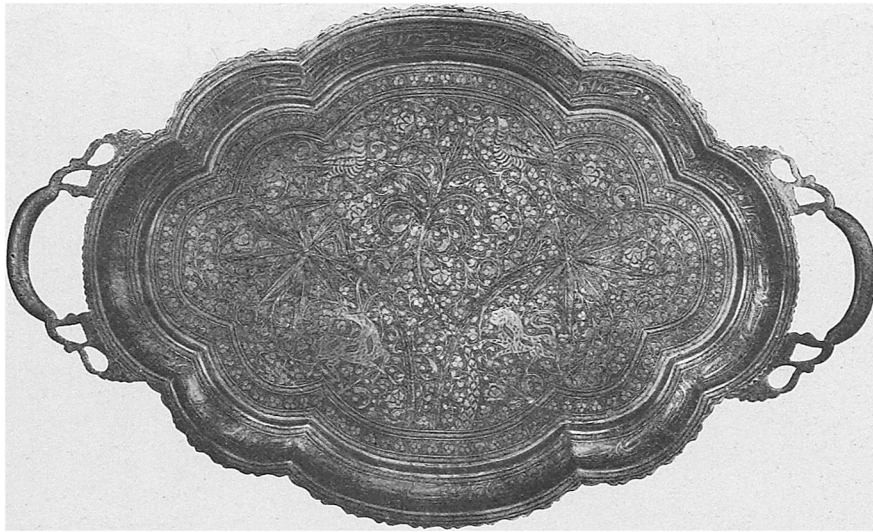
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AN ELABORATE BIT OF CARVED IVORY FROM DELHI —Courtesy Marshall Field & Company



MORADABAD TRAY OF ELEGANT DESIGN AND EXQUISITE DECORATION  
—Courtesy Marshall Field & Company

## East Indian Art Handicraft

By EVELYN MARIE STUART

INDIA, far realm of enchantment, the fabled East, from which, for countless centuries, came much of all that the rest of the civilized world prized as rich and rare, would seem to be about to experience a renaissance of her ancient prestige in the manufacturing and decorative arts. The gorgeous Indian Bazaar at Marshall Field and Company's opens the eyes of a great western city to something apparently new, which is yet in its inspiration and tradition as old as the pyramids.

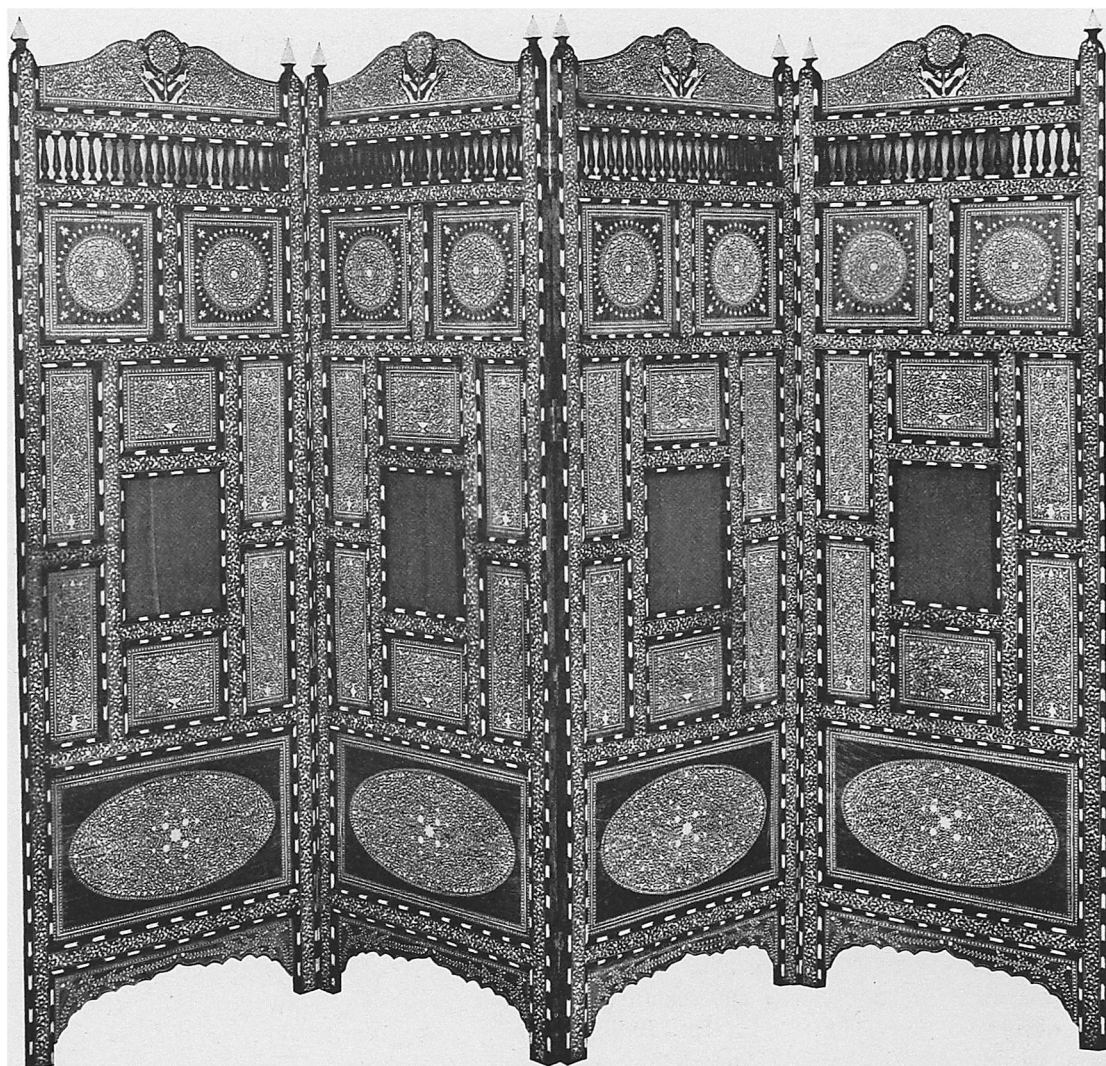
For upwards of three thousand years these delicate weavings, these rich embroideries, these intricate carvings, inlays and metal work have been maturing in this ancient land among a people to whom we are related in blood and language, intellect and taste. For the Hindus are the great eastern branch of that proud Aryan race to which all European peoples belong. The word Aryan, in its simple meaning, signifies excellent, and when we reflect upon the refinement of eastern art, philosophy and culture, and the perfection and wonder of western mechanical, civil and scientific achievement, we feel that the children of the Aryan

family have well proved their claim to the high title.

There is, therefore, a something in the nature of a family reunion in the showing of all that is finest and best in the decorative art products and manufactures of India at Field's, acknowledged the world over as the most colossal establishment of its kind and typical of the wonders of western civilization and methods.

At first sight these gay colored weavings and embroideries, unbelievably delicate and intricate carvings and inlays, all seem curiously remote and foreign. But back of them is the story of the ever active and acute Aryan mind, seeking to carry whatever it attempts to the last detail of perfection. Here is it doing in art and design what in the West we have done in mechanics, so that the intricacies of a Paisley shawl pattern and the mechanism of a locomotive engine have, after all, a something in common, since both seek for perfection in their line.

In their line, too, we must admit the art wares of India have achieved perfection. They

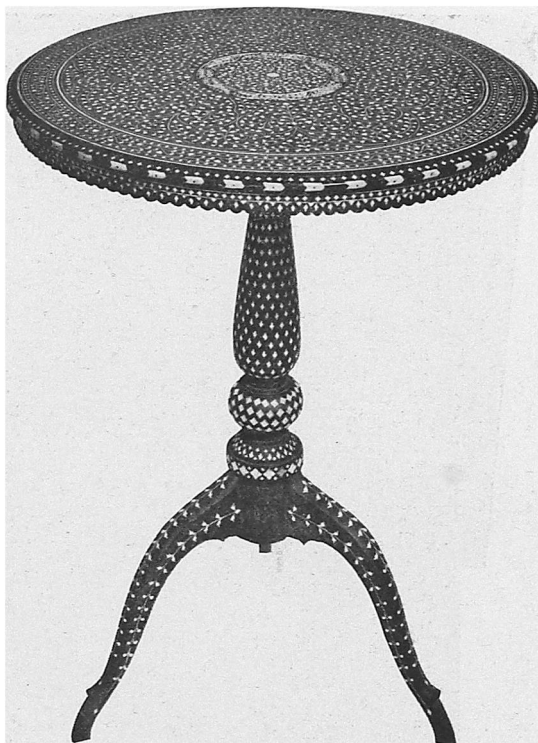


AN IVORY INLAID SCREEN OF FINEST WORKMANSHIP  
THE TRIUMPH OF THE PUNJAB OFFERINGS

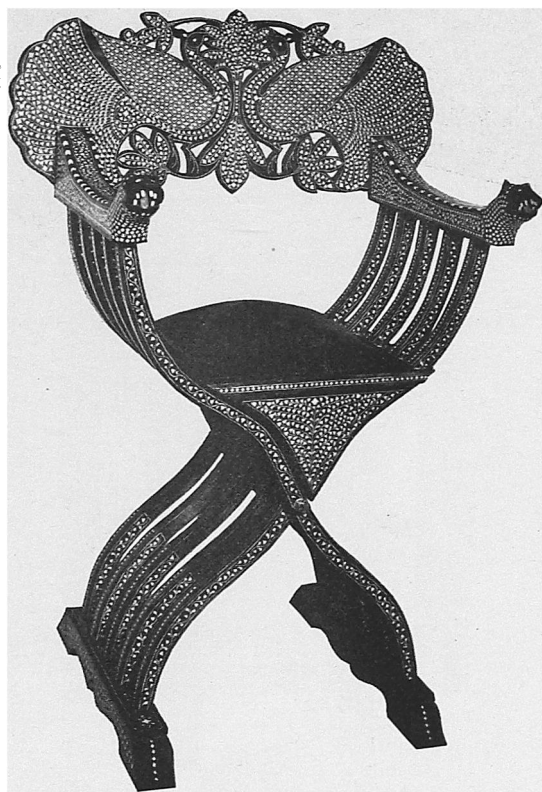
— Courtesy Marshall Field & Company

have always stood in the world's eyes as marvels of beauty and delicate skill. Alexander the Great and his generals wondered at, coveted and possessed the very same weavings, jewels and metal vessels which tempt the Chicago public at the Indian Bazaar today. Undoubtedly our own opportunities are superior to those of the invading Greeks, for, while Indian art has been stereotyped for generations, it was, undoubtedly less refined in his day than in ours. Terry, in his *Voyage to the East Indies*, published in 1655, gives us a description which anyone who has seen the Indian goods at Field's would recognize:

"The natives there shew very much ingenuity in their curious manufactures, as in their silk stuffs, which they most artificially weave, some of them very neatly mingled either with silver or gold, or both. As also in making excellent quilts of their stained cloth, or of fresh-colored taffata lined with their pintadoes (prints or chintz), or of their sattin lined with taffata, betwixt which they



A Dainty Teatable from the Ivory Inlaid Furniture of the Punjab  
—Courtesy Marshall Field & Company



Graceful Ivory Inlaid Chair from the Punjab  
—Courtesy Marshall Field & Company

put cotton wool, and work them together with silk. . . . They make likewise excellent carpets of their cotton wool, in fine mingled colours, some of them three yards broad, and of a great length. Some other richer carpets they make all of silk, so artificially mixed, as that they lively represent those flowers and figures made in them. The ground of some others of their very rich carpets is silver or gold, about which are such silken flowers and figures as before I named, most excellently and orderly disposed throughout the whole work. Their skill is likewise exquisite in making of cabinets, boxes, trunks and standishes, curiously wrought, within and without; inlaid with elephants' teeth, or mother-of-pearl, ebony, tortoiseshell or wire; they make excellent cups and other things of agate or cornelian, and curious they are in cutting of all manner of stones, diamonds as well as others. They paint staves or bedsteads, chests or boxes, fruit dishes, or large chargers, extremely neat, which, when they be not inlaid, as before,





IVORY INLAID DRESSING CASE FROM THE PUNJAB

—Courtesy Marshall Field &amp; Company

they cover the wood, first being handsomely turned, with a thick gum, then put their paint on, most artificially made of liquid silver, or gold, or other lively colours, which they use, and after make it much more beautiful with a very clear varnish put upon it. They are also excellent at limning, and will copy out any picture they see to the life."

For centuries such handicraft as this drew to India the adventurous traders of every land. We cannot forget that the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus was an accident due to his desire to benefit the world by finding a shorter route to India.

Indeed, its silks and embroideries, rugs, shawls, jewels, sandalwood and inlays, silver, gilt and bronze are woven into our history and gleam through romance. The costliest gifts of kings and princes of old to favorites and courtiers and to each other, with the opening up of India by British and Dutch trading companies, these things became accessible to the gentry and upper middle classes.

In Thackeray's day the India muslin gown and Cashmere shawl were high favorites of fashion; grandmother's love letters were kept in a sandalwood box, and nothing was finer for a bride than gifts of these things. Queen



CARVED ROSEWOOD MADURA TABLE FROM THE MYSORE PRESIDENCY

—Courtesy Marshall Field & Company

Victoria and belles of her girlhood reveled in such luxuries, and those who have inherited a shawl or embroidery, scarf or fan from a grandmother of that time, today treasure them with loving pride.

Unfortunately, this same commerce with the western world which brought to India the patronage of the aristocracy of other lands was destined, in time, to rob her of the bulk of her trade at home. For, in time, came the cheap machine-made wares of Europe to tempt the native of the East away from the fine old handicraft of his own ancient trade guilds.

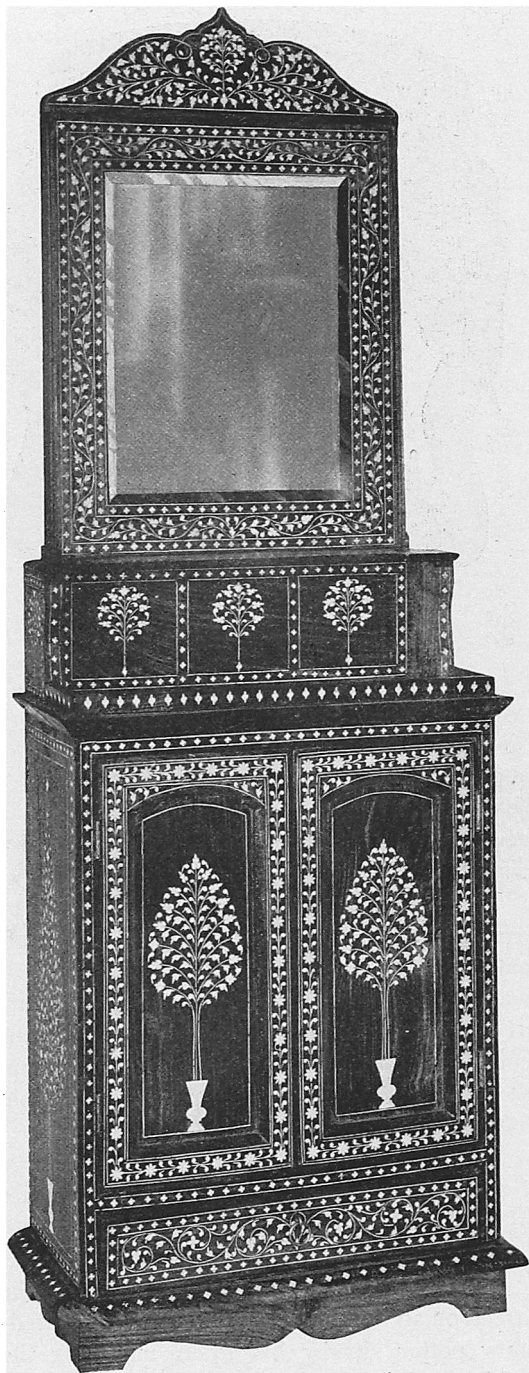
In his "Industrial Arts of India" Sir George C. M. Birdwood presents this idyllic picture of the Indian village and its hereditary craftsmen:

"Outside the entrance of the single village street, on an exposed rise of ground, the hereditary potter sits by his wheel moulding the swift revolving clay by the natural curves of his hands. At the back of the houses, which form the low irregular street, there are two or three looms at work in blue and scarlet and gold, the frames hanging between the acacia trees, the yellow flowers of which drop fast on the webs as they are being woven. In the street the brass and copper smiths are ham-



A POPULAR AND USEFUL TABOURET DECORATED WITH IVORY INLAY

—Courtesy Marshall Field & Company



IVORY INLAID DRESSING CASE FROM THE PUNJAB WITH MIRROR WHICH DROPS DOWN OUT OF SIGHT WHEN NOT IN USE

—Courtesy Marshall Field & Company

mering away at their pots and pans; and further down, in the veranda of the rich man's house, is the jeweler, working rupees and gold mohrs into fair jewelry, gold and silver earrings, and round tires like the moon, bracelets and tablets and nose rings, and tinkling ornaments for the feet, taking his designs from the fruits and flowers around him, or from the traditional forms represented in the paintings and carvings of the great temple, which rises over the grove of mangoes and palms at the end of the street above the lotus-covered village tank. At half-past three or four in the afternoon the whole street is lighted up by the moving robes of the women going down to draw water from the tank, each with two or three water jars on her head; and so, while they are going and returning in single file, the scene glows like Titian's canvas and moves like the stately procession of the Panathenaic frieze. Later the men drive in the mild grey kine from the moaning plain, the looms are folded up, the coppersmiths are silent, the elders gather in the gate, the lights begin to glimmer in the fast-falling darkness, the feasting and the music are heard on every side, and late into the night the songs are sung from the Ramayana or Mahabharata. The next morning with sunrise, after the simple ablutions and adorations performed in the open air before the houses, the same day begins again. This is the daily life going on all over western India in the village communities of the Dakhan, among a people happy in their simple manners and frugal way of life, and in the culture derived from the grand epics of a religion in which they live and move and have their daily being, and in which the highest expression of their literature, art and civilization has been stereotyped for 3,000 years."

He also tells the fascinating story of the trade guilds and how every art has been handed down from father to son for so many generations that it has become all but second nature with the workmen, and relates, with sympathy, the decline of the guild influence and the loss of patronage as a result of western machine competition.

"Under British rule," he says, "which se-



cures the freest exercise of individual energy and initiative, the authority of the trade guilds in India has necessarily been relaxed, to the marked detriment of those handicrafts the perfection of which depends on hereditary processes and skill. The overwhelming importation of British manufactures also is even more detrimental to their prosperity and influence, for it has in many places brought wholesale ruin on the hereditary native craftsmen, and forced them into agriculture and even domestic service. But the guilds, by their stubborn resistance, further stimulated by caste prejudice, which they oppose to all innovations, still continue, in this forlorn way, to serve a beneficial end, in maintaining, for probably another generation, the traditional excellence of the sumptuary arts of India against the fierce and merciless competition of the English manufacturers. The guilds are condemned by many for fixing the hours of labor and the amount of work to be done in them by strict bylaws, the slightest infringement of which is punished by severe fines, which are the chief source of their income. But the object of these rules is to give the weak and unfortunate the same chance in life as others more favored by nature. These rules naturally follow from the theocratic conceptions which have governed the whole organizations of social life in India; and it is incontrovertible that the unrestricted development of the competitive impulse in European life, particularly in the pursuit of personal gain, is absolutely antagonistic to the growth of the sentiment of humanity, and of real religious convictions among men."

Thus it was that Field's representative, in his Indian travels, found the country teeming with the most highly skilled craftsmen waiting and eager for employment. Thus it was that American money commanded the best in every market, and so it is that at the Indian Bazaar we find perfect marvels of craftsmanship, available at sums which seem small in proportion to the labor which they represent.

Our illustrations afford some idea of the variety and charm of Indian craftsmanship. Many of them are rare antiques, as, for instance, the hand mirror with cover, one of a



NATURAL TEAKWOOD, INLAID IVORY, FROM  
MYSORE PRESIDENCY, SOUTH INDIA

—Courtesy Marshall Field & Company

pair of fine old metal work pieces of steel and gold filigreed on a composition metal. Inside the covers are quaint old paintings in what appears to be a kind of water color, pale and delicate, but well drawn and interesting. The metal work of the cover is pieced with sparkles of rich and beautiful color beneath and the forms are graceful and decorative. Set upon a console table in a hall they would, indeed, be fascinating as well as useful for a final peep at hat and veil arrangement.

Many antique pieces of old Bidri ware, so-



ONE OF A PAIR OF ANTIQUE MIRRORS EXEMPLIFYING MOHAMMEDAN ART IN GOLD AND SILVER DAMASCENED ON STEEL

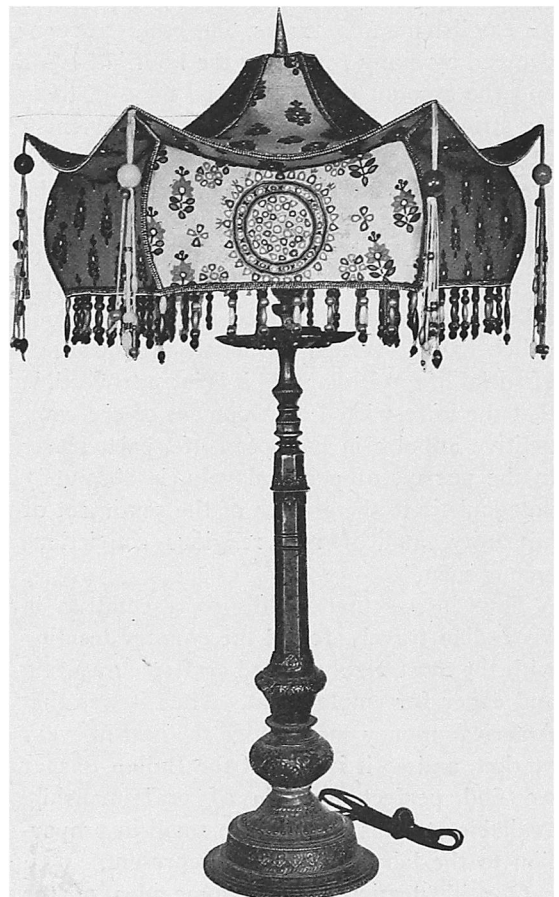
—Courtesy Marshall Field & Company

called from Bidar where it is produced, are to be found in this collection of metal work. Bidar is conceded by connoisseurs to be the highest art practiced in India next to enameling. It was originally introduced by the Mohammedans from Persia and is a species of Damascening, an art thus described by Sir George Birdwood:

"Damascening is the art of encrusting one metal on another, not in *crustæ*, which are soldered on or wedged into the metal surface to which they are applied, but in the form of wire, which by undercutting and hammering

is thoroughly incorporated with the metal which it is intended to ornament. Practically, damascening is limited to encrusting gold wire, and sometimes silver wire, on the surface of iron, or steel, or bronze. This system of ornamentation is peculiarly Oriental, and takes its name from Damascus, where it was carried to the highest perfection by the early goldsmiths. It is now practiced with the greatest success in Persia and in Spain. In India damascening in gold is carried on chiefly in Cashmere, at Gujrat and Sialkote in the Panjab, and also in the Nizam's dominions it is called *kufi* work. Damascening in silver is called *bidri*, from Bidar, in the Nizam's dominion, where it is principally produced.

"In *bidri* the metal ground is a compound of copper, lead and tin, made black on the



ELECTROLIER MADE FROM AN OLD BRONZE TEMPLE LAMP FITTED WITH A SHADE FASHIONED FROM KUTCH EMBROIDERY

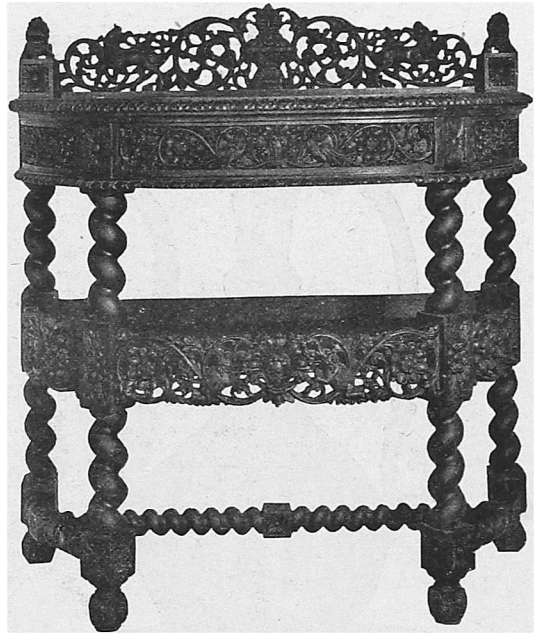
—Courtesy Marshall Field & Company

surface by dipping it in a solution of sal-ammoniac, saltpetre, salt and blue vitriol. This alloy, after being first melted and cast, is turned in a lathe to complete the form, which is usually that of the ordinary *sarai*, or water goblet, or *hukah* stand. Then the required pattern is graven over it, and inlaid with silver; and finally the ground of the vessel is blackened, and its silver ornamentation scoured to the brightest polish."

We illustrate a magnificent ewer and basin in copper and gold repoussé which should delight the heart of some collector. This and others of these pieces were produced for the Delhi exhibition in 1903, a most extensive showing of Indian wares, to which the British Government lent its aid and support. Silver flagrees and enamel rosewater sprinklers and wonderful trays and bowls of Moredabad, incised and lacquered decoration on brass or steel, with touches of red lacquer worked in with a hot tool, are also to be seen in great number and in a wealth of Hindu and Mohammedan designs. These effects are also produced at Jaipur, and the distinction between the species of ornament is easily discernible in this as in all Indian handiwork. The original Aryan or Hindu motifs are naturalistic, most often involving the antique knop and flower pattern in some of its myriad variations. Mohammedan designs, on the other hand, are ever more highly conventionalized, often even strictly geometric.

Ivory carving is yet another art of which this collection affords some very delightful and beautiful examples. We reproduce one of the larger pieces, whose intricacy, delicacy and grace may well be judged of from the illustration. There are, however, some tiny details, as the chain on the *hukahs* and the elephant's forehead decorations, which are unbelievably minute and fine.

In inlaid work, furniture, boxes, screens and the like this exhibition particularly abounds. The little dressing case, with the mirror, seen in our illustration, is an example of the beauty of inlaid ivory and metal on sandalwood which is produced in such profusion at Surat, Mysore and Bombay. Indeed, these little dressing cases, handkerchief and



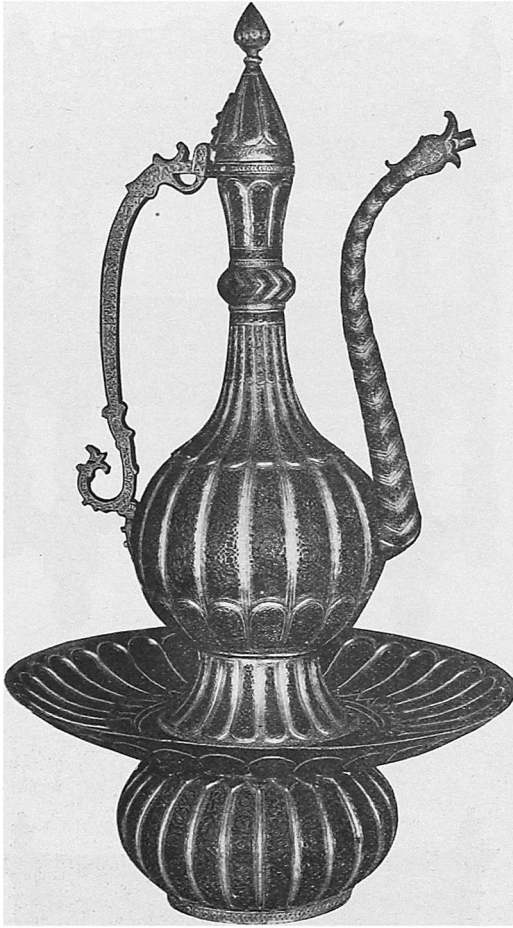
CARVED ROSEWOOD SIDETABLE FROM THE MYSORE PRESIDENCY

—Courtesy Marshall Field & Company



ROSEWOOD SIDEBOARD FROM THE MYSORE PRESIDENCY

—Courtesy Marshall Field & Company



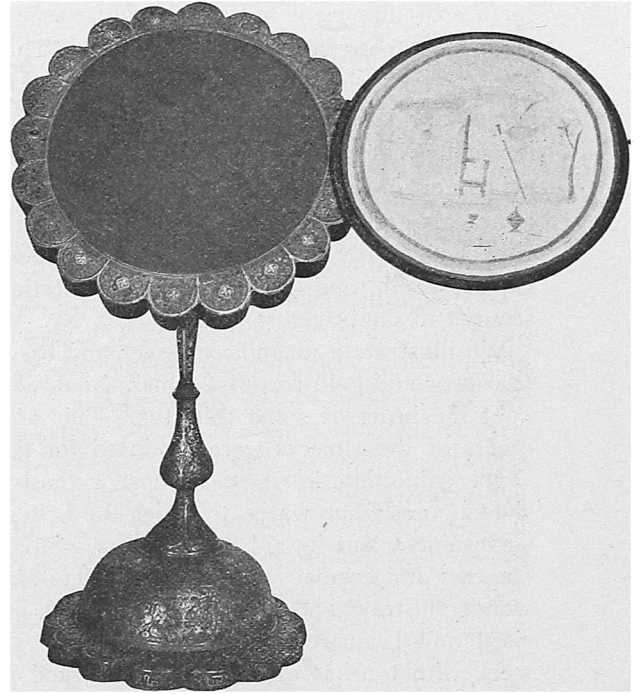
EWER IN COPPER AND GOLD REPOUSSE MADE  
FOR THE IMPERIAL EXHIBITION AT DELHI  
—Courtesy Marshall Field & Company

glove receptacles have come to be known quite generally as Bombay boxes, and of these inlays in general Birdwood remarks as follows:

"They are made in the variety of inlaid woodwork, or marquetry or tarsia, called *piqué*, and are not only pretty and pleasing, but interesting, on account of its having been found possible to trace the introduction of the work into India from Persia, step by step, from Shiraz into Sindh, and to Bombay and Surat."

The upright dressing case with mirror which we illustrate is in a pattern similar to that of the small boxlike case. It is, however, suited to the needs of a gentleman, evidently designed as a shaving cabinet and mirror.

The rosewood and ivory screen is a marvel of refined and elaborated ornateness before



ANTIQUE PERSIAN MIRROR (OPEN) SHOWING  
PAINTING INSIDE THE COVER  
—Courtesy Marshall Field & Company

which western handicraft would stand appalled. Only the patience of the Orient, where time is of no account, could have produced a thing of its kind, representing so many hours of labor at such small recompense. This and the inlaid peacock chair and tea-table offer excellent ideas of the scope and possibilities of such furniture. The tabouret from the Panjab and cabinet with stand of teakwood from the Mysore Presidency are not quite so elaborately treated as regards ornament, and in them we may study the pleasing effect of contrast between plain surfaces and ornamented ones.

A high favorite with the British residents of India is the Madura table of carved rosewood supported on elephants' heads. As a tea-table it is therefore especially appropriate, carrying with it suggestions of the traditions of a tea-drinking people and a tea-raising country.

In carvings, indeed, Indian craftsmen have long excelled. The native productions of Delhi in transparent filagree effect are truly remarkable, and some of the screens in the Field collection are triumphs of their kind.



MODERN WOOL RUG FROM THE PUNJAB  
—Courtesy Marshall Field & Company

Then there is the Bombay Blackwood, whose designs have been influenced by the taste of Dutch traders, which is also much admired.

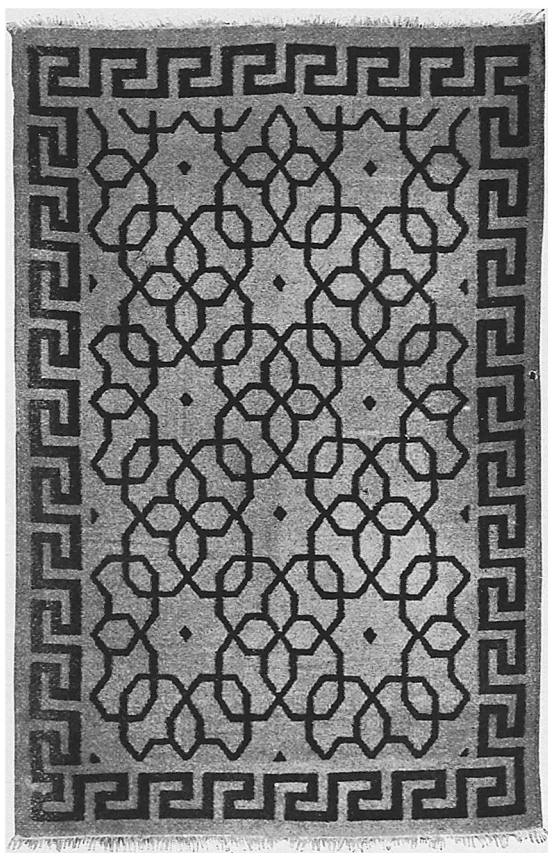
We illustrate two examples of fine rosewood furniture showing this European influence at its best, commingled with the original grace of Indian fancy.

Of rugs we illustrate three characteristic examples, an embroidered wool felt, a hand-woven India drugget in geometric pattern and a splendid Persian pattern in silk and wool, rich enough for the floor of a palace. The felt rug is most interesting for its delightfully traditional bird and flower forms. The India drugget is of much better quality than has been produced formerly and will prove popular for summer homes and sun parlors. The aristocrat of the group is exquisite in purplish reds that glow in varied effects from different points of view, but even with the beauty of color eliminated, as in a black and white re-

production, there is still ample fascination in the design alone.

Of embroideries and weavings there is a brilliant profusion, comprising cashmere shawls and draperies with Kutch embroidery, bridal skirts and velvet wall hangings, tied and dyed cottons and Persian prints. The velvet hangings are often embroidered in bullion with jeweled effects, and some of the embroideries repeat in gold thread and colored floss the intricate traceries of enamel and jewelings seen on the metal work. We illustrate a characteristic embroidery drapery and a lamp shade involving embroidered silk. The dainty organdie-like muslin with gold borders, the brocade cloth of gold and scarlet and numerous other effects in textiles must be seen to be appreciated. A great modiste could easily find fresh inspiration therein.

Then there are the Kashmere *papier maché*



MODERN INDIA DRUGGET FROM THE MYSORE  
PRESIDENCY  
—Courtesy Marshall Field & Company





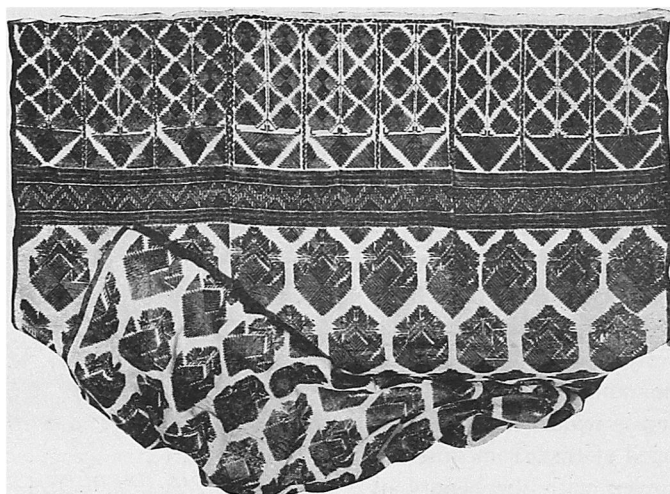
CASHMERE CREWEL WOOL EMBROIDERY ON  
TARKAND FELTED WOOL RUG  
—Courtesy Marshall Field & Company

articles, screens, bowls and desk sets, gay with red, blue and white flowers, green leaves, black backgrounds and trceries of gold. Truly this is an exhibition of interest to the general public, for many of its offerings are not beyond the reach of everyone with taste.

One may indulge in a taste for these wares with an assurance of helping to keep alive and active a most superior craftsmanship, ripened through centuries of toil and skill, and of helping to feed and clothe a people who would otherwise be almost destitute.

It would be strange indeed if the ideal of brotherly love so long the hope of religion should be realized at last with the aid of commerce awakening man to the mutual dependence of races and their benefit one to another through the medium of their art wares.

One curious result of the present conflict between the nations of Europe has been the bringing of the East and West into closer relationship. Japanese, Chinese and East Indian wares are now coming into the markets of the United States to replace the things which Europe is too tragically busy to supply. A change in taste and fashion is thereby being brought about as we become familiar with and learn to love the rich color and intricate designs which characterize the long refined arts of these old civilizations.



POOLKARIE—ANTIQUE SILK EMBROIDERY  
FROM THE PUNJAB —Courtesy Marshall Field & Company